

Name: Diane Guz

Title: Paraprofessional

Organization or Agency: AFSCME Local 3429

Topic: HB-6659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 6659 concerning education funding for Connecticut.

My name is Diane Guz and I've been a paraprofessional for 23 years in the New Haven public school system. I work with special needs students at Celentano Biotech, Health and Medical Magnet School, which serves pre-K to eighth graders. I'm a member of AFSCME Local 3429, the New Haven paraprofessionals union.

Most of my students are eager to learn, and that's what keeps me at Celentano. I am proud of the work our paraprofessionals do. We help to keep the school up and running, and my union is ready to really take off — I am working to rally the paraprofessionals in my building.

However, paraprofessionals are being used as substitute teachers constantly. New Haven schools need funds, and those funds must go toward attracting and retaining adequate staffing. When we're not getting paid what we should be, it's the students that lose out ultimately.

I also would like to see increased awareness of special education, so that all teachers are willing and able to make accommodations, because teachers and paraprofessionals both have the same goal: student success. We have a gym teacher at Celentano who is fantastic with our special needs students. He understands special ed. When they went up to bat, he was there to show them how to hold the bat or kick the ball. He would come in closer to throw the ball. He did what he needed to do so they felt included in his classes, which also shows the other students special needs students can do things!

As a lifelong New Haven resident, I want to see New Haven schools recognized. I want the students of New Haven to have everything they need. And I want our state legislators to listen to us when we speak.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Diane Guz

AFSCME Local 3429, New Haven Paraprofessionals